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Book Review: *Loren Eiseley: Commentary, Biography, and Remembrance* Edited by Hilda Raz

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Loren Eiseley: Commentary, Biography, and Remembrance. Edited by Hilda Raz. Introduction by Scott Slovic. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. xxi + 69 pp. \$9.95 paper.

This little book is a nice addition to the Loren Eiseley shelf in my home library. Much has been written about Eiseley's life, thought, and work, but he still remains little known to the public at large. As authors of essays in this volume testify from various angles, Eiseley's writings are a rich reservoir of notions and emotions that connect humans to nature, life, and to themselves. The essays were first published in the Fall 1997 issue of *Prairie Schooner*, the journal in which the 20-year-old Eiseley published his first poem in 1927.

Scott Slovic's introductory chapter is a thoughtful overview of Eiseley as a nature writer and deserves reading more than once. In the first essay poet Howard Nemerov gives a reminiscence of his "distant friend." The longest essay ("Eiseley in Lincoln") by Gale Christianson (author of *Fox at the Wood Edge: A Biography of Loren Eiseley*, 1990) sheds light on the early influences in Eiseley's life. Naomi Brill (last essay) continues this theme by emphasizing that Eiseley came from a childhood of suffering and loneliness, but, thanks to his sensitiveness to nature, he came to love the small things that are easily lost from our ordinary view. Eiseley's long-time secretary Caroline Werkley remarks that Eiseley's ability to see magic and mystery everywhere would have made him a shaman in ancient tribes as it made him a scientist in our age.

Fred Carlisle (author of *Loren Eiseley: The Development of a Writer*, 1983) aptly characterizes Eiseley's writings (his "literary achievement") as having four layers: science, autobiography, poetry, and metaphysics. Eiseley, I believe, was also a writer of four seasons. Peter Heidtmann (author of *Loren Eiseley: A Modern Ishmael*, 1991) picks up the "autumn" side of Eiseley as "an isolate haunted by darkness." Erleen Christensen argues that Eiseley as an evolutionary scientist saw time backward, expressed in millions of years, and thus uncovered death and the reality of "zero." Ben Howard starts from the same premise and then attempts to "speak of Eiseley's gift for evoking the spiritual condition of man in a state of grace." I wish Howard's three-page essay had been longer.

Of Eiseley's 14 published books (prose, poetry, and anthology), four of them were particularly present in the minds of this volume's writers: *The Immense Journey*; *The Unexpected Journey*; *The Night Country*; and *All the Strange Hours*. The last two are mostly autobiographical while the first two are Eiseley's thoughts on nature and life. This volume, written by eminent scholars on Eiseley, introduces the reader to the world of a great mind. As a geoscientist interested in Eiseley's writings and reflections, I learned much from it. **Rasoul Sorkhabi**, *Energy and Geoscience Institution, University of Utah*.